

# Verda Welcome Bridge:

In Remembrance of the Honorable Verda Freeman Welcome  
*America's First African-American Female State Senator (1907- 1990)*

By Ferdinand Mehlinger



After graduating from what was then Morgan State College in 1939, the Honorable Verda Welcome became a leading civil rights advocate in the state of Maryland.

The Honorable Verda Freeman Welcome, politician, civil rights and community activist, was one of fifteen children born to North Carolina farmers, John and Docia Freeman.

She came to Baltimore in 1929 to further her education and graduated from Morgan State College in 1939 with a bachelor's degree. After earning a Master of Arts degree from New York University, she became a teacher in the Baltimore City Public School System, where she worked for eleven years.

In 1959, twenty years after her graduation from Morgan, Welcome was elected to the Maryland House of Delegates to represent the Fourth District of Baltimore City becoming the first African-American female to hold that position. She received the Woman of the Year Award in 1962, which was presented by the Women's Auxiliary to

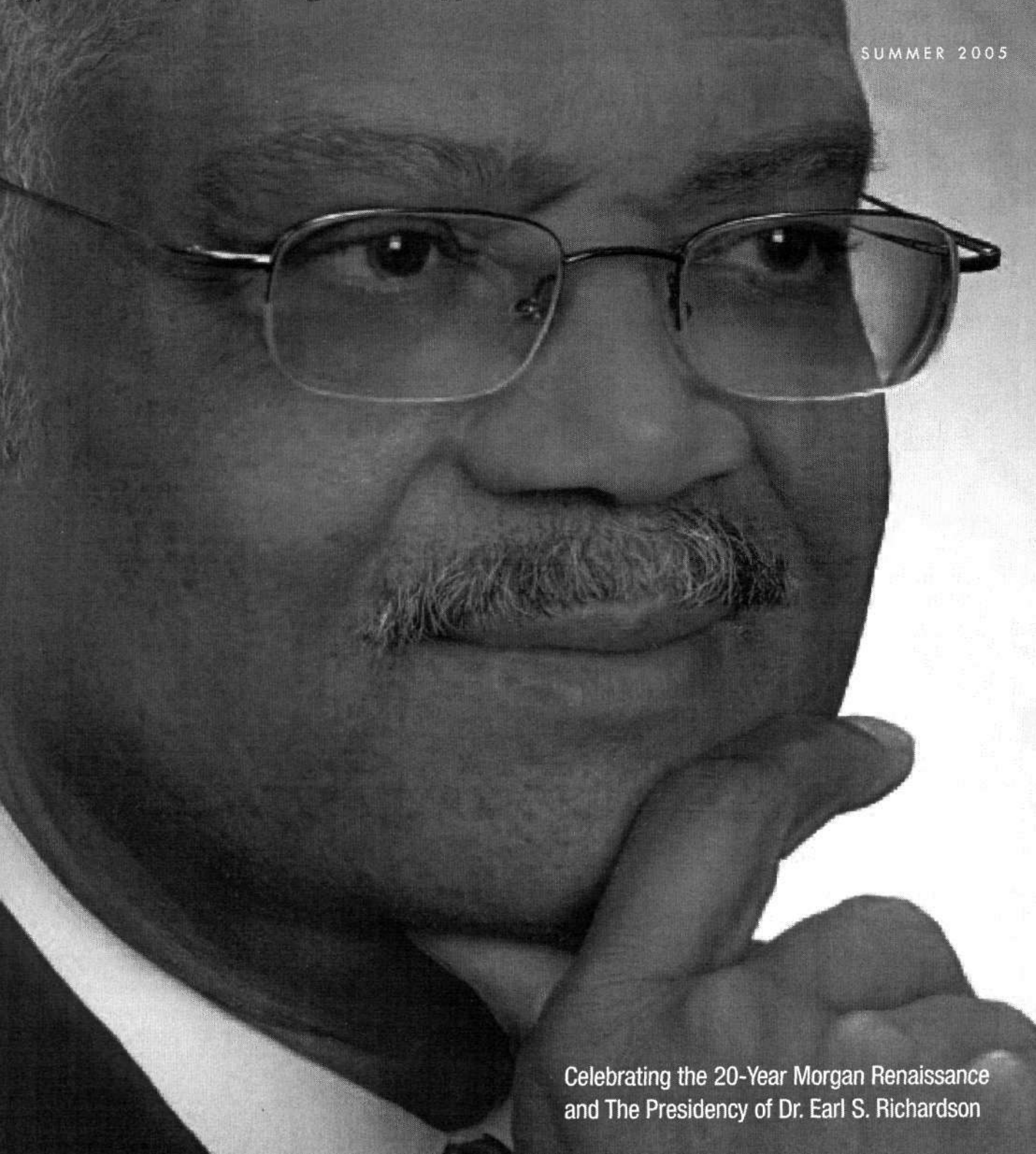
the National Medical Association. After her tenure in the House of Delegates, Welcome became America's first African-American female state senator, serving from 1962 until 1982. Some of her notable accomplishments include her influence on the passage of legislation addressing discrimination in public accommodations, funding for the construction of Provident Hospital, creating the rank of lieutenant for policewomen in Baltimore City, equal pay for equal work, harassment of welfare recipients, illegal employment practices, and several other reforms in the state of Maryland.

At the time of its initial construction in 1964, the Welcome Bridge was 14 feet wide, and 20 feet high and cost \$65,000 to build. The Welcome Bridge connects the north and south campuses of the university, spanning Cold Spring Lane.

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